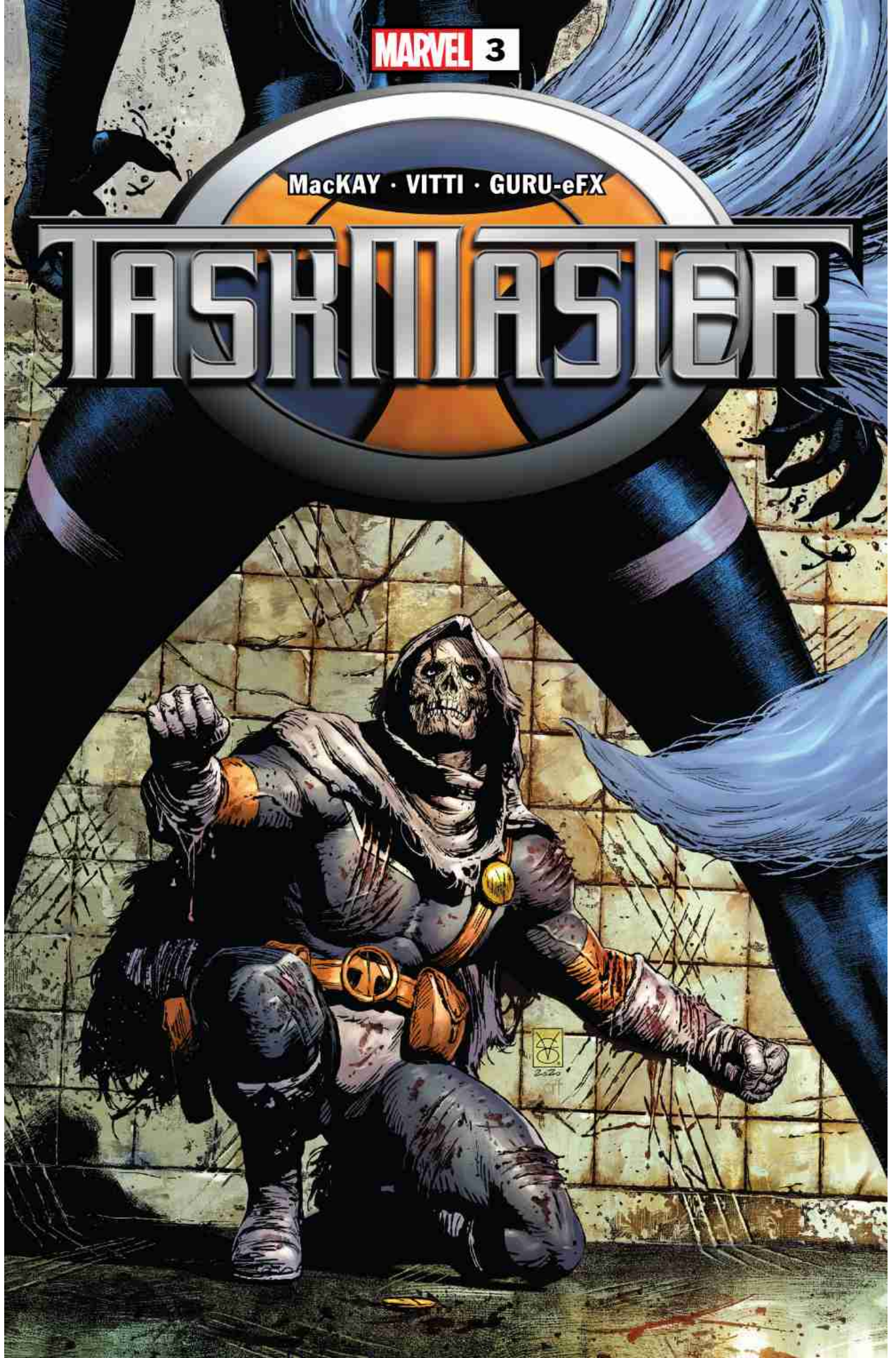


MARVEL 3

MacKAY · VITTI · GURU-eFX

TASKMASTER



Using innate photographic reflexes, Tony Masters is able to replicate any action he witnesses, no matter the complexity. Using these skills, combined with an arsenal of deadly facsimile weapons, he operates as a henchmen trainer and mercenary for hire known throughout the underworld as...

TASKMASTER

"THE RUBICON TRIGGER"

PART THREE

MARIA HILL is dead, and the entire world thinks Taskmaster did it. He's innocent for once, but that's irrelevant. The BLACK WIDOW is already on his trail, and she won't be the only one.

One man believes Tony: former S.H.I.E.L.D. Director NICK FURY. He's willing to help, but he wants something in return. Before she died, Hill was working on something called the RUBICON TRIGGER, an old H.A.M.M.E.R. project. To access it, Fury needs the kinesis signatures of Squadron Supreme Director PHIL COULSON, Agents of Wakanda Director OKOYE and South Korea's N.I.S. Tiger Division Director AMI HAN.

They started with Coulson. Tony got that signature easily...but not before Phil called in HYPERION. Thanks to a little argonite radiation, Taskmaster won that slugfest, but he barely survived. And there are two stone-cold warriors left to battle.

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SEOUL
REPUBLIC OF KOREA.

«THE FINAL
TREATMENT.
AFTER THIS...»**

*TRANSLATED
FROM KOREAN.

«...WE WILL
BE READY»

«READY
FOR THE FINAL
WARD»

«I'M
TELLING YOU,
NICK. I LOVE
AN APOCALYPTIC
TERROR
CULT.»**

«THEY'RE
EVERGREEN,
THEY NEVER
GO OUT OF
STYLE.»

**TRANSLATED
FROM ARABIC.

«GLAD YOU'RE
HAVING FUN,
TONY.»

«YOUR
LITTLE VACATION
IS CERTAINLY COSTING
ME PLENTY. BETWEEN
THE MEDICAL NANOS THAT
PUT YOU BACK TOGETHER
AFTER HYPERION, THE
GENE TREATMENTS FOR
YOUR LITTLE PALS
AND YOUR CUSTOM
RIG...»

«YOU'RE
SURE NONE OF
THEM SPEAK
ARABIC?»

«APOCALYPTIC
TERROR CULT,
NICKY. THESE GUYS
CAN BARELY
READ.»

«BESIDES,
I'M MAKING YOUR
OPERATING BUDGET
BACK. I'M WORKING FOR
THESE JAMOKES,
AFTER ALL.»

«PLEASE,
LIKE THEY
HAVE ANY
MONEY.»



«DON'T GET COMFORTABLE. TAEJUKGI INBOUND, 90 SECONDS.»

«PERFECT. LOVE YOU.»

«DROP DEAD.»

«TASKMASTER!»

«WE HAVE ADMINISTERED THE FINAL GENE TREATMENTS. WE WILL SEE RESULTS SOON?»



«OH YEAH, PAN-SU.»

«THE STRENGTH OF TEN MEN, BULLET-PROOF SKIN, THE WORKS.»

«WOULD I SELL YOU ANYTHING LESS THAN THE BEST?»



«EXCELLENT! FIRST, WE STORM THE BLUE HOUSE AND EXECUTE THE PRESIDENT. THEN, ON TO P'YONGYANG!»

«COOL, COOL...»

«LISTEN, GOOD LUCK, BUD. REALLY, I'M ROOTING FOR YOU.»

SUCKER.



«AND ONCE WE'VE DESTROYED-- "SUH-KAH"? WHAT?»

HEY!

«...TASKMASTER?»

...THREE...

...TWO...

CRASH!!!

...ONE.

(TIGER
DIVISION!)

(YOU'RE
ALL UNDER
ARREST!)

LIKE
CLOCKWORK.

(TAE GUKGI!!
YOU FOOL,
YOU'RE NOT THE
ONLY ONE WITH
POWERS!)

(KILL
HIM!)



SHORTLY.

⟨NO PROBLEMS. THEY SEEMED TO THINK THEY HAD SUPER-POWERS...⟩

⟨APOCALYPTIC TERROR CULTS. YOU KNOW WHAT THEY'RE LIKE.⟩

⟨HA! DON'T I EVER.⟩

⟨ARE YOU FLYING BACK TO BASE WITH US, SIR?⟩

⟨ON A DAY LIKE TODAY? ARE YOU NUTS?⟩

⟨SEE YOU BACK AT BASE, CAPTAIN!⟩

SEE YOU THERE, PAL.

SEE YOU THERE.



FURY CRIED
BLOODY MURDER
WHEN I TOLD HIM
I NEEDED A PYM
PARTICLE RIG.

BUT SCREW HIM,
HE'S GOT HIS HAND
IN ANY NUMBER OF
BLACK BUDGET
COOKIE JARS.

BEST HE COULD DO
WAS A BOOTLEG, SO
WHO KNOWS HOW LONG
THIS THING'LL LAST.



BUT RIGHT NOW, MY MAIN
WORRY IS FREEZING TO DEATH.
I'M TOO SMALL, WE'RE UP TOO
HIGH, HE'S GOING TOO FAST.

"DAY LIKE
TODAY."

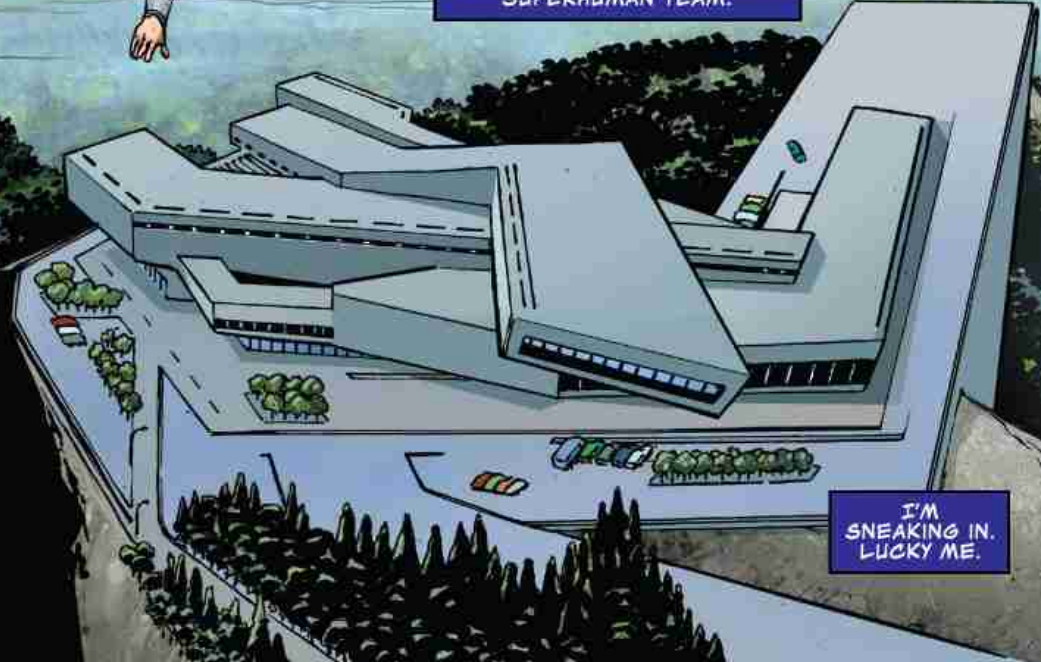


WHAT A PUTZ.
I'M DYING UP
HERE.



BURAMSAN
MOUNTAIN.

BASE OF OPERATIONS FOR
THE HORANG-I BUSEO--
TIGER DIVISION--THE REPUBLIC
OF KOREA'S GOVERNMENT
SUPERHUMAN TEAM.



I'M
SNEAKING IN.
LUCKY ME.



«GOT A
TRANSPORT FULL OF
TERRORISTS COMING IN.
MAKE SURE THE
PILLOWS ARE FLUFFED
AND THE SHEETS HAVE
BEEN TURNED DOWN,
WILL YOU?»

NOW NORMALLY,
THIS KIND OF
THING'S BEYOND
MY PAY GRADE.



BUT WITH THE
BLACK WIDOW
LOOKING TO ICE
ME FOR A MURDER
I DIDN'T EVEN
COMMIT--

--OR GET
PAID FOR--



--WELL, I'LL
GO WHERE I
GOT TO GO,
DO WHAT I
GOT TO DO.



«DIRECTOR.»

AND IN ORDER
TO DO THAT,
WHAT I NEED...



«TAE-WON.»

«CONGRATULATIONS
ON THE RAID.»

...IS TO LAY EYES ON
DIRECTOR AMI HAN
AND TAKE IN HER
KINESIC SIGNATURE.



SO.

HIDE.

STUDY.

ESCAPE.

EASY.

«IT WAS NOTHING. WE HAD BEEN TIPPED OFF THAT THERE WOULD BE SUPERHUMANS BUT DIDN'T FIND ANY.»

«STRANGE. AND YOU SAID THEY HAD BEEN UNDERGOING... INJECTIONS?»

«YES. THEY SEEMED TO THINK THAT IT WOULD GIVE THEM POWERS. ONE MENTIONED THE AMERICAN MERCENARY.»

«TASKMASTER.»

«HMM. THAT'S WORRISOME.»

«IS HE A THREAT?»

«NORMALLY, NO. HE IS A CLOWN.»

OUCH.

«BUT LATELY, HE'S BEEN RATHER BUSY.»

«THERE'S BUZZ THAT HE'S BEHIND MARIA HILL'S MURDER. AND THEN THAT SCENE WITH HYPERION A FEW WEEKS AGO...»

«THAT WAS UGLY.»

«WAS IT EVER.»

UGLY, PRETTY. I WON.

AND SPEAKING OF PRETTY, THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT HAN...

READING HER MOVEMENTS, TAKING IN HER GESTURES...

SHE'S LIKE HYPERION, LIKE TAEGUKOI.

SHE MAY BE PRETENDING TO BE HUMAN, BUT SHE'S NOT.



THAT'S THIS
MESS ALL
OVER THOUGH,
ISN'T IT?

NOTHING
IS WHAT IT
SEEMS.

THE WHOLE
THING STINKS.

HILL'S MURDER,
THE WIDOW COMING
AFTER ME, FURY
PRESS-GANGING ME
INTO HIS CRUSADE...

YOU DON'T WORK
FOR CRAZY PEOPLE
FOR AS LONG AS I HAVE
WITHOUT LEARNING HOW
TO FEEL OUT WHEN
YOU'RE BEING PLAYED.



IT'S WHY I'VE
INSTITUTED A
STRICT "NO NAZIS"
BUSINESS POLICY.

A CUSHY JOB
FROM BARON ZEMO
INEVITABLY TURNS
INTO THE PUNISHER
RUNNING YOU OVER
WITH A TRUCK.

NOBODY
NEEDS THAT
KIND OF
GRIEF.

**NO LONGER ACCEP
NAZI CUSTOMERS**



BUT MARK
MY WORDS.

SOMEONE'S
PLAYING ME.

GOT THE
WIDOW DRUNK
ON A BLOOD RAGE,
GOT FURY HIDING HIS
GRIEF IN DEVOTION
TO THE MISSION.



SOMEONE'S
PLAYING
US ALL.

AND I
HATE IT.

<--TECHS
WILL ANALYZE
WHATEVER THEY
WERE INJECTING
THEMSELVES
WITH?>

<YES, LET
THEM GET TO
THE BOTTOM
OF IT.>

HMM. ENHANCED
PHYSIOGNOMY.
NO DOUBT.

ENHANCED SENSES TOO,
I'LL BET. SHE ALMOST
CLOCKED ME WHEN I
JUMPED OFF OF TAEGUKGI.

I'LL
HAVE TO
BE QUIET.

THE
SLIGHTEST
SOUND--

WARNING.
MASS
REDUCTION
UNSTABLE.
WARNING.

BEEP
BEEP BEEP
BEEP

BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP

<WHAT?>

<THERE'S
A TINY MAN IN
THE VENT.>

<GET
HIM.>

STUPID
BOOTLEG
PYM RIG!

BEEP
BEEP BEEP
BEEP





OKAY,
NEW
PLAN...

TASKMASTER.

TOO CLOSE IN HERE
FOR THE SWORD,
WHICH SUCKS.

BUT I'VE SEEN
WINTER SOLDIER
WITH A KNIFE,
SO THAT'LL DO.

LISTEN,
I'M HAVING
A DAY...



...AND I
HAVE NO IDEA
WHO YOU
ARE.

SO I CAN
BEAT YOU DOWN
HERE AND NOW,
OR YOU CAN LET
ME GO ON
MY WAY.

YOUR
CHOICE.



I'M THE
WHITE
FOX.

AND
YOU'RE
NOT GOING
ANYWHERE.







...DIRECTOR
AMI HAN.



H-HOW...?



THAT'S
ENOUGH.

HE'S
MINE...

WHAT
ARE
YOU--

OH NO
NO NO
NOOO--



...AND
I'M
TAKING
HIM.

I'M
DEAD.

WHAT ARE
YOU DOING
HERE?

HOW DARE YOU
BREAK INTO OUR
HEADQUARTERS?!

I SURRENDER,
WHATEVER.

JUST
DON'T LET
HER KILL
ME.



I'M HERE FOR
TASKMASTER. HE
KILLED MARIA HILL,
AND HE'S GOING TO
PAY THE PRICE.

I'M NOT
LEAVING
WITHOUT
HIM.

YOU DON'T
GET TO WALK
INTO MY BASE AND
TELL ME WHAT'S
WHAT—



I COULD
RUN. SURE.

BUT SHE
WOULD BE
ON ME IN A
SECOND.

AND I'D
BE DEAD.



LOOKS LIKE
IT'S TIME FOR
THE FAIL-SAFE.



BEEP!

<I DON'T UNDERSTAND! WHAT ABOUT THE GENE ENHANCEMENTS? THE TREATMENTS?>

<WHAT ABOUT OUR POWERS?>

I'D BEEN INJECTING THOSE GOONS WITH GENE ENHANCEMENTS FOR TWO WEEKS BEFORE WE TIPPED OFF TIGER DIVISION.

UGH...

<...MY HEAD...>

THEY HAD PAID FOR A SUPER-STRENGTH, BULLETPROOF SKIN PACKAGE.

THEY DIDN'T GET IT.

WHAT THEY DID GET, HOWEVER, WAS A TAILORED MIX OF ADAPTIVE ALIEN DNA AND RETROVIRAL ENHANCEMENTS...

...THAT TURNED THEM INTO A PSYCHIC SUITCASE NUKE.



STRONG ENOUGH TO
BLANK EVERYONE IN
THE BUILDING OUT FOR
A MINUTE OR TWO.

UNLESS YOU HAVE,
FOR INSTANCE,
PURPOSE-MADE PSYCHIC
BAFFLES BUILT INTO
YOUR SKULL MASK.





I COULD
KILL HER
RIGHT NOW.

SHE'D BE
OFF MY TRAIL
FOR GOOD.

I COULD
TELL FURY TO
GO HANG, HAVE
MY LIFE BACK.

FORGET ABOUT
MARIA HILL AND
WHATEVER THAT
WAS ALL ABOUT.

ALL I'D
HAVE TO
DO...

...IS
TAKE TWO
STEPS.

TWO STEPS
TOWARD THE
BLACK WIDOW.

JUST TWO
STEPS.

TWO LITTLE
STEPS.

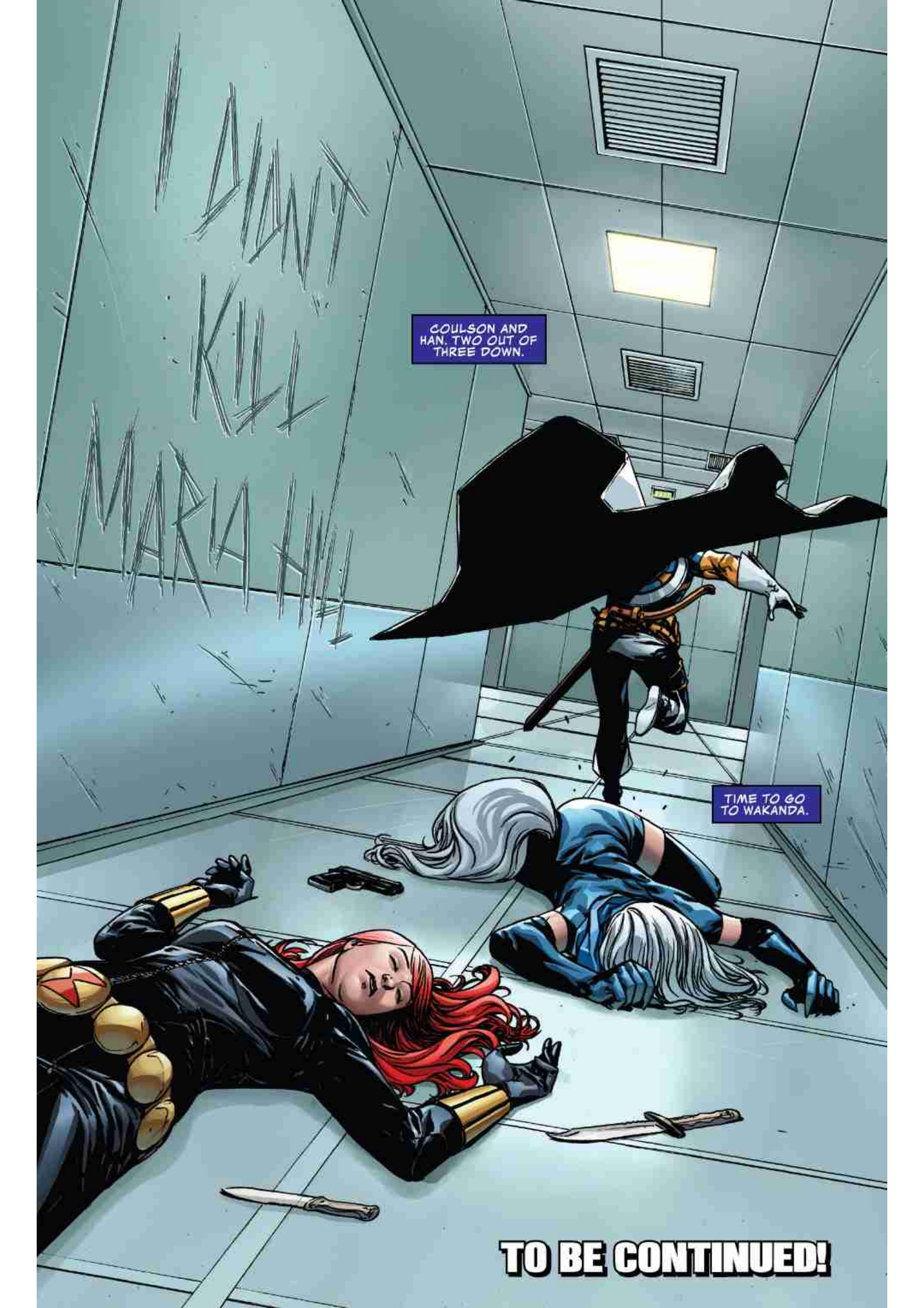
BUT WHAT IF SHE
WAKES UP BEFORE
I GET THERE?

I SAW HER
DIE BEFORE.

WHAT IF
SHE COMES
BACK?

URGH...

NOPE.

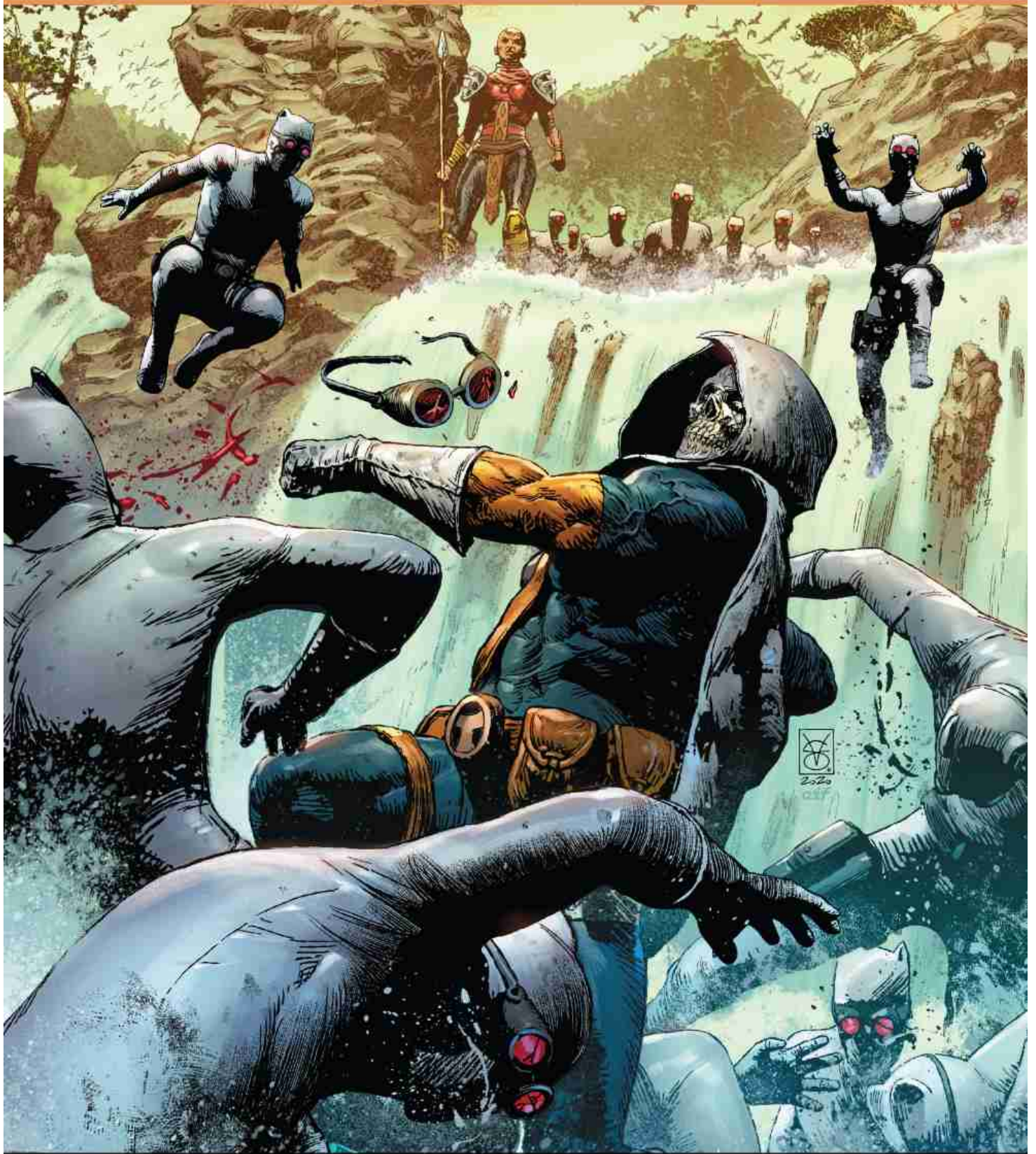


COULSON AND
HAN. TWO OUT OF
THREE DOWN.

TIME TO GO
TO WAKANDA.

TO BE CONTINUED!

NEXT ISSUE



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